

## **East Grand Boulevard Historic District**

110-740 and 115-781 East Grand Boulevard

Local

State

State Marker

National            ✓            11/30/99



300 block of East Grand Boulevard streetscape.

### **Historic overview:**

During the nineteenth century, city planning efforts were strongly oriented towards streets, emphasizing wide and elegant thoroughfares as a means to create a beautiful city. The effort to create a “Grand Boulevard” in Detroit was initiated in 1876. The concept was to create a boulevard around the city; but it was met with almost complete disapproval. In 1879, James Randall, a state legislator and real estate developer pushed the bill through legislation by attaching the boulevard authorization to the popular issue of creating Belle Isle Park.

City funding was minimal due to lack of support, and initial development was dependent upon donations of enthusiastic property owners and developers along the route. In 1887, several sections of the boulevard had taken on a very attractive appearance and there was quite a rush for investment along its line. By 1913 Grand Boulevard encircled the center of the city, and was generally recognized as the city’s chief adornment. Although major European cities such as Berlin and Paris had instituted such avenues through their cities, none were thought to be as gracious as Detroit’s Grand Boulevard. All sections were well supplied with trees, shrubbery, and flowerbeds in great variety.

Grand Boulevard remained the most magnificent of Detroit’s thoroughfares until the Great Depression. Property prices declined and people of moderate means were able to move in. By the mid-1950s, many of the fine houses on East Grand Boulevard became rooming houses or received modern additions. This section of the Boulevard has become a neighborhood of mixed use, yet it still retains some of its grandeur of yesteryear.

